

The Historian

of Hancock County

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

June 1995

A TASTE OF COMMERCE

Our June luncheon meeting is set for noon on Thursday the 15th. Our guest speaker will be Cindy Vernon, executive director of the Hancock County Chamber of Commerce, who will discuss the origins of the Chamber, its present and future plans.

The meeting will be held at Los Amigos Restaurant on Highway 90, Bay St. Louis next to Evergreen Nursery. Luncheon, chosen from the menu will cost \$4.00 plus tax and tip. Please call 467-4090 for reservations as early as possible since we need to inform the restaurant of numbers.

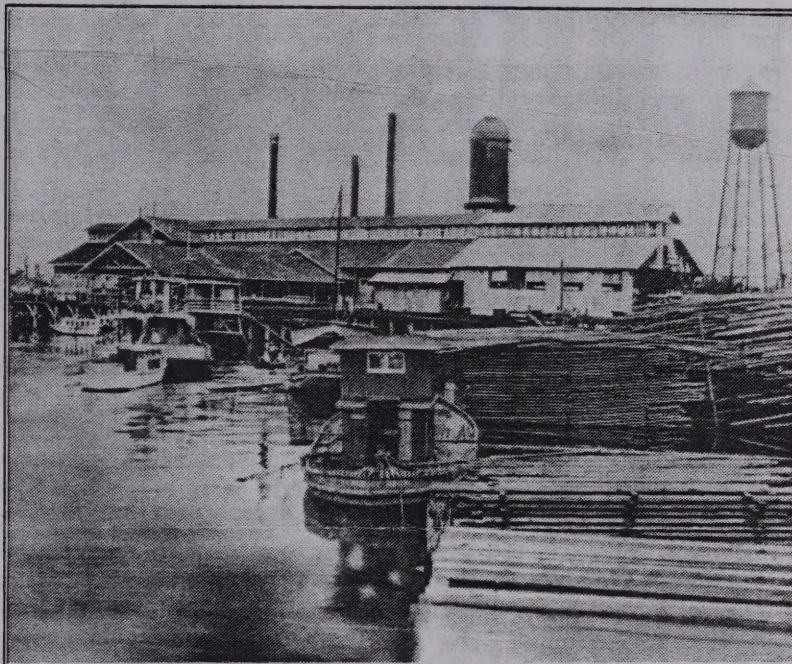
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The tour to the Crosby Arboretum was absolutely wonderful. With its elaborate decorations, the parade drew great attention as we motored through the NASA site with a motorcycle escort to Picayune.

The booths were very interesting and informative, covering everything from health screenings to waste disposal, wildflower planting, poison plant recognition, poison snake recognition and the Adopt-A-Highway program.

The weather was perfect with a light breeze blowing continuously. This is always a wonderful outing and those who missed it should try to join us when we do it again.

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HINES LUMBER COMPANY

Photo courtesy of Buck Ladner

MISSISSIPPI'S LUMBER BARONS

The famous and fabulous long leaf pine belt of Mississippi ranges roughly from the Alabama border to the Pearl River and north from the Coast about 150 miles - and as late as 1880 around 85 percent of it was one magnificent sweep of unbroken virgin forest.

But in the '80s the northern lumber markets, having ravaged and depleted the vast forests of New England and the Great Lakes, began to speculatively look southward to the limitless miles of Mississippi's yellow pine - and by their example, many Mississippi lumbermen who had

previously hugged the banks of the streams and rivers with little and local sawmills, also began expanding into much larger operations.

All of which was made easy by the low purchase price of unlimited pineland. A large percentage of the three to four million acres of public land obtained by the state of Mississippi from the federal government was virgin pine forest, and during these early years was sold in tremendous tracts to individual buyers for \$1.25 an acre.

Later, seeing the danger of this practice, the state began allowing only one 240-acre tract to each individual purchaser within

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Last month just before publication day for the Historian, our poor copy machine suffered a severe and near terminal seizure. Our friend, Ellis Cuevas invited us to use his printer to get the May edition in the mail on schedule. We are eternally grateful for his generous help.

In true Hancock County fashion, word of our dilemma reached the Chamber of Commerce and the next morning, Cindy Verner brought us the great news that the Chamber Board of Directors voted to give one of their two copiers to us.

Someone happened to mention to Sheriff Ronnie Peterson that we had this wonderful gift and no way to transport it from the Chamber to Loblano House. By the time we returned from Crosby Arboretum, the machine was sitting in our office. Ronnie, thank you. As always, you have performed a great service for the Historical Society. Remember, members, it was he who had the out-building and old porches torn down when we were given the Loblano House a few years ago.

With election coming this fall, I want to mention that our Constitution prohibits the Society from backing any candidate or political party. A number of our friends/members are running for office. While we certainly wish them the best of luck (it is always good to have friends in high places), we can not endorse anyone, so please read the individual platforms and question the goals of each before giving them your valuable vote.

In the first arucie, as always, we request that you phone in your intention to attend the meeting. Even if this is inconvenient, it is important. We don't want to S T R E T C H food or to have to buy a lot extra, just in case. But please don't let this prevent your coming, even if you have to call late. Charles H. Gray, President

(BARONS from page 1)

a 12-month period. This, however, did not stop the exploitation. It only changed the method. Through false entries, numerous and contiguous 240-acre tracts continued to pass into the possession of single owners in violation of the intent of the law. In one such case, the Phillips Marshall Company, predecessor of the Delta Pine Company, purchased over 100,000 acres of pine forests in the 80s. Calvin Griffin, in another instance, bought land from the state in the names of employees, his oxen, and even deceased persons. Lands belonging to the state colleges were allowed to fall into the hands of a few lumbermen and speculators. The same thing happened to the pinelands of the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad. Delos Blodgett, a Michigan speculator, acquired 721,000 acres of Mississippi pine forestland which he resold to a few lumbermen. In 1903 two thirds of the long leaf pinelands of Mississippi was owned by non-operators and one third of this portion was controlled by six persons. The remaining huge one third was owned by seven mill operators. However, it was the ownership of these large and adjoining blocks of virgin forest that justified the extensive expenditures necessary for mills and equipment. A mill cutting thirty million board feet annually had to have 20,000 acres of virgin forest to guarantee a ten year run.

When the lumber industry reached its peak between 1906 and 1915 the control of production was intensely concentrated. The J.J. Newman Lumber Company was the largest lumber operator in the state in 1905 with an investment of \$23 million and owned 400,000 acres of timberland. The L.N Dantzler Lumber Company, founded in 1849, was an excellent example of Mississippi lumbermen who met the

challenge of the northern exploiters and operators. By 1914 it was the largest family-owned lumber business in the state, with seven mills and over 400,000 acres of timberland. In this year it produced 145 million board feet.

Edward Hines, the world's largest wholesale lumberman, owned 241,000 acres or more and a number of sawmills in Hancock and Pearl River counties. Between 1908 and 1915 there were from one to three mills in every south Mississippi county owning most of the land and cutting most of the timber.

Five railroads were built through the Mississippi pinelands to serve this booming lumber industry. The log road of the J.S. Newman Lumber company became the Mississippi Central, and the Great Southern Lumber Company built the New Orleans and Great Northern from Bogalusa, Louisiana to Jackson Mississippi.

An eye witness who traveled the Gulf and Ship Island in 1902 stated that there was an average one sawmill and turpentine distillery for every three miles between Hattiesburg and Gulfport. Between Newton and Shipman, Mississippi, 45 mills were located on the Mobile, Jackson and Kansas City Railroad in 1909.

Between 1890 and 1899 the number of mills increased from 338 to 608, whose combined output was slightly more than a billion feet. By 1909, ten years later, they had almost tripled again - with 1647 mills operating with a total capital investment of approximately \$40 million.

It is not generally realized that in this boom period of the Mississippi lumber industry (1890-1915) much more lumber was exported than consumed in this country. In the year 1902-03 there were 119 carloads sold to domestic markets but 18,000

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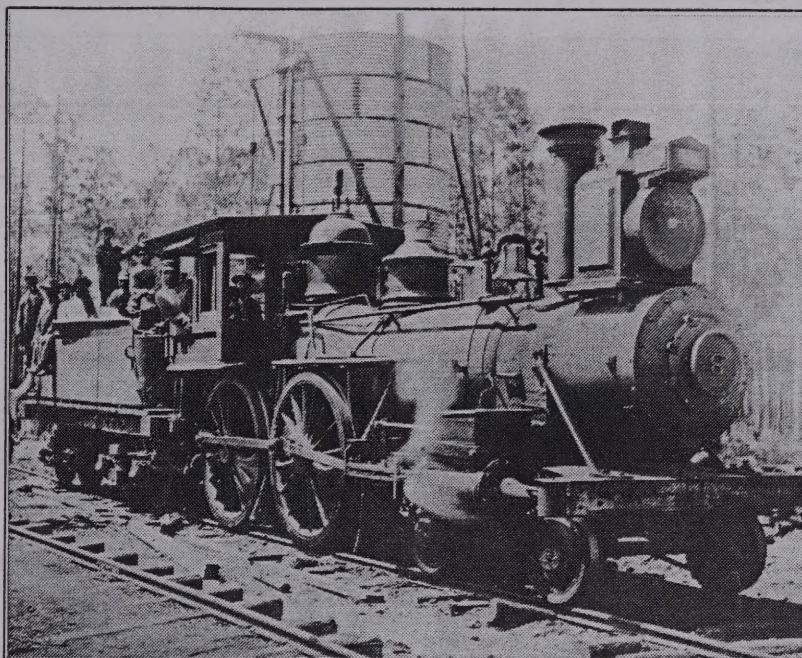
(Barons from page 2)

carloads went into the overseas trade. Which explains why, in those days, the harbor at Gulfport was crowded with lumber schooners and steamers loading with Mississippi pine destined for practically every country in the world.

In that quarter century between 1890 and 1915, when the rasping whine of the saws was the theme song of Mississippi, towns were created, many to disappear with the mills that made them, and others to change with the times and survive: Hattiesburg, Laurel, Moss Point, Hattiesboro, Lucedale, Lumberton, Purvis, Wiggins and most outstanding of all, the Coast city of Gulfport. And some of the companies survived in other roles - J.J. White and Eastman-Gardner built cotton mills in McComb and Laurel, the Finkbine Lumber Company established what was once the largest pickle plant in the world at Wiggins, [Ma Brown's Pickles] and the Dantzler Lumber Company was the prime mover in the starting of a paper mill (Now International Paper Company) at Moss Point.

Between 1890 and 1915, the lumber mill operators exercised as much power as the feudal overlords. They ran the stores, they established banks, they built railroads, and hundreds of men and their families looked to them for practically everything they ate or wore or possessed. In Mississippi during the early 1900s nearly 65 percent of the people were in some way dependent upon the lumber barons. (Excerpts from an article on the lumber industry in Mississippi by Nollie W. Hickman in The Journal of Mississippi.)

THANKS - To Richard Johnson for building shelving and dividers in the Loblano House vault to hold our priceless collection of photographs.



HINES MILL ENGINE

Photo courtesy of Buck Ladner

FEALTY TO BRITISH CROWN IN 1764

The following Mississippi Coast citizens went to Pensacola to take the British Oath of allegiance in 1764:

Hugo Ernestus Krebs; Pierre Rochon; Simon Favre; Jean Favre; Marianne Favre; Francois Favre; Augustin Rochon; William Favre; Pierre Rochon (another); Jean Claude Dupont; Louis Forneret (Fournier); Louis Carriere; Joseph Chastang; Charles Mioy (Meaut?); Baptiste Christian Lardnare (Ladner); Jean Baptist Lordinine (Ladnier); Nicholas Lardmare (Ladner); Nicolas Calco (Carco); Francois Chenet (Cananette); Louis DeFlandre (DeFlanders); Jean B. LeFlan (DeFlanders?); Barthelemey Grelot (Gollott, Guillotte); Louis Christian Lardnare (Ladner); Jean Baptiste Nicas (Necaise); Pierre Cajot (Cachot). [Source: Research of Mrs. Catherine Collins, Biloxi, cited in "Twelve Flags Triumphs & Tragedies" by Dale Greenwell, 1968.]

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APPRECIATION

Thanks to the Fire Department and to Jim Thriffley for some wonderful photos of buildings in Bay St. Louis (before they burned).

A very special thanks to Carter Church for donating copies of the Sanborn maps of Bay St. Louis for the year 1892.

A very special thanks to Yancy Pogue for donating copies of the Sanborn maps of Bay St. Louis for the year 1898.

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